

A LETTER
FROM
AN ENGLISH
PRISONER OF WAR,
TO HIS FRIEND,
A SEAMAN
IN THE
BRITISH NAVY.



"England! thou never didst, nor ever shall
"Lye at the foot, of a proud Conqueror;
"But when thou first did help to wound thyself,
 " What might'st thou do
Were all thy children kind and natural! "

SHAKSPEARE.

Gosport :

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TO
JOHN HOLLOWAY, ESQ.

Commander of
HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP,

ST. GEORGE.

Sir,

YOUR indefatigable exertions to extirpate the spirit of disaffection, which has evinced itself amongst the Seamen of his Majesty's Ships, excite the admiration of all who have witnessed them; and animated by your example the *Officers* seem to renew their endeavours to the same effect.

Permit me *Sir*, to add my Mite to their general efforts and grant me the satisfaction of publicly avowing myself your debtor, for whatever merit it possesses in point of sentiment, as it has been principally deduced from the good advice which you on all occasions have given to those subordinate to you.

That your exertions to the above laudable purpose may speedily prove successful, is sincerely wish'd I believe by every person and by none more ardently than by

SIR,

Your very obedient,

Humble Servant,

CHARLES BRIDGE SELBY.

TO THE READER.

In offering the following poetical effort to your perusal, I have neither Interest nor applause in view, excepting the Interest every man ought to have in the welfare of his Country; should this in the least contribute to it by suppressing the pernicious ideas, which have infected the minds of too many of the British Seamen, by converting a single member of them—I shall consider myself inexpressibly happy.

Charles Bridge Selby,

H. M. S.

St. George,

Sep. 27th, 1798.



A

SAILOR'S LETTER,
TO HIS FRIEND; &c. &c. &c.

TO you bright owner, of a heart sincere,
My earliest friend and once a messmate dear,
Whose manly bosom, never was the seat
Of *Guilt, Distraction, Treason or Deceit*,
These lines I send, though written from a Cell
E'en there does *Loyalty* and *Virtue* dwell.

Together born, together rear'd and bred,
'Twas our's, the self same track of life to tread,
One honest trade employ'd our youthful days,
It gain'd us health, subsistence, peace, and praise;
No care we knew, our fervent pray'rs to Heaven,

To bless our King and State, were daily giv'n.

Thus healthy, happy, and resign'd to fate,
 We guiltless liv'd, nor wish'd to change our state,
 Till lawless villains, and a factious band,
 Spread desolation thro' a neighb'ring land:
 Bade *Murder, Treason*, and their horrid trains,
 Usurp the State, depopulate the Plains,
 Nor ceas'd this dreadful unrelenting strife,
 'Till black Sedition snatch'd their Sov'reigns life.

Shock'd at the scene, Britannia vengeful rose,
 And nam'd the ruthless Regicides her foes,
 For not to France were these dread schemes confin'd,
 They strove to taint a Briton's loyal mind,
 Themselves unhappy, it would comfort give,
 In seeing others, as unhappy live;
 To check such plans, the Sons of Freedom arm'd,
 Urg'd on by virtuous Loyalty alarm'd;
 The glorious cause our youthful ardour rous'd,
 With joy the rights of Sov'reigns we espous'd,
 For Conscience felt, our foes offence had giv'n
 To that great King of Kings, who reigns in Heav'n.



Impress'd with this we left our native home,
 Nor fear'd the vast and trackless main to roam,
 With cheerful wills, our duty we perform'd,
 Whilst friendship's social joys our bosoms warm'd,
 When low'ring clouds proclaim'd the tempest near,
 First on the topsail yards we would appear;
 The sail reduc'd descending to the deck,
 We fearless toil'd, nor did the wild winds reck;
 Oft o'er the Cann, the tale, the sprightly catch,
 Deceiv'd the moments, of the midnight watch,
 So pass'd our time, and each returning day,
 Brought new attractions to the wat'ry way,
 Our Captain saw, and all our zeal approv'd,
 And we his kind and manly conduct lov'd.

Thrice did we meet with a superior foe,
 And thrice our thunder dealt the Victor's blow,
 When fate subservient, to some needful end,
 Thought fit to tear me from my much lov'd friend
 And place me here, a Captive to a race
 Of men,----to human nature a *disgrace*.

Thus retrospection fondly brings to view,

Those happy scenes, I hope yet to renew,

—But say my friend, what demon has impress'd

Infernal schemes in every Seaman's breast?

Why, in defiance to eternal laws,

They openly desert their Country's cause?

Say, why Sedition plies her dang'rous art

To pour destruction on th' unwary heart?

Why shameful *Treason*, does such plans create,

To sap the mighty basis of our State?

Does promis'd pow'r such infamy excite,

Or is it gold, that Britons disunite?

Oh! shun the bait, avoid the specious spell,

For Villains promises are false as hell!

Dismiss infatuation and believe,

That Frenchmen, only promise to deceive.*

Reflect a moment—Sell your Country's fame,

Fly to these Rebels, and their promise claim,

If power was promis'd, mark but their reply,

Shall Frenchmen, leagues with Traitors ratify?

Blind is the man who men like you impow'r's,

You sold your country's cause, you shan't sell our's.

* The Poet here alludes to those Frenchmen who hold the reins of Government at present.

Desist deluded men! we'll those employ,
 Whom neither bribe, nor promise, can decoy;
 Desist deluded men!—we've gain'd our aim,
 Desist! you sue in vain—they will exclaim.

Suppose that *Gold* was promis'd, Gold was paid,
 For *Guilty Gold*, your Country you've betray'd—
 Ah wretched man! to future evils blind,
 Too late, the error of that deed, you'll find,
 A little while your splendour you enjoy,
 But soon reflection shall your bliss destroy.

If weary'd Nature give your limbs to rest,
 Yet fear and anguish, shall torment your breast,
 From some dark dream of horror and despair,
 You'll wake to all the pangs of guilty care;
 Thus conscious ill, your peace shall terrify,
 And taint with bitters, all that Gold can buy.
 The great Commander, of this earthly ball
 By various ways, may win you to your fall;
 Perhaps, instill into your faithless mind,
 A fatal flame, for some one left behind,
 The fond idea of some Maid you've lov'd,
 To whom you've false as to your Country prov'd,

Where-e'er you go, the Phantom shall pursue,
And in your breast, each painful thought renew,
Till by intolerable anguish wrung,
You seek her home, are taken, tried, and hung.*

But grant that here, you justice may elude,
Yet God shall punish your ingratitude,
When your black soul shall reach another world,
'Midst fiercest torments 'twill be surely hurl'd!
Cease mad enthusiasts, such proceedings cease,
Design'd to rob you of eternal peace!
What added guilt can that black bosom feel,
Which sells its Sovereign's cause, or Country's weak.

And you whose hearts as yet unsullied are,
Oh! guard your acts with unremitting care,
Drag curs'd *Sedition* from its vile abode,
Expose the Man, who deviates from good;
Where discontentment shews her sullen face,
And fleeting murmurs whisper thro' the place,
Where subtle *Oaths*, of secrecy and sin,

* An incident of the above nature, is very recent in the Newgate Calendar.

The dark designs of mutiny begin;
 Oh! shun the scene—and those who riots move—
 Be deaf as Death—to hear is to approve.—

*Temptation here has spread her hateful art
 And strives its baneful maxims to impart ;
 But vain, and useless, frail and futile prove,
 Her schemes to lead us from the cause we love,
 Nor threats, nor promises, our firmness shake,
 No Gallic terrors can impression make,
 Attach'd unto our King, we scorn the tribe,
 Whom fear can sway, or guilty Treason bribe;—
 Shall we, ungrateful to our Sov'reign's care
 Reject the free support, we daily share ?
 Or take the glitt'ring bribe, or eat the bread,
 Which brings our Country's curses on our head ?
 No!—lost to Liberty, we'll Loyal live,
 'Till providence again shall freedom give,
 For better fortune yet shall grant us pow'r,
 'Ere long we hope to know that happy hour,

* The large bribes offered to our Prisoners in France. The separation of the English Captives, from the Irish—and several other schemes of this nature, will fully explain this allusion.

When *British Gratitude*, with open hand,
Shall bid us welcome to our native land.

But should the malice of a cruel foe,
Forbid us e'er, such wished for scenes to know,
And finding nought our loyalty o'ercomes,
Destine these gloomy walls to be our tombs,
If such our fate, yet guiltless is our end,
We'll live and die, our Country's constant friend.

—And oh! Hibernians, wake to reasons call
No more let factiou's toils, your minds enthal,
Think on what grief from such proceeding springs,
What endless ills, such dreadful discord brings;
Your sister kingdom shudders at those plains,
Which blood of relatives and neighbours stains;
Oh! check the poignard aim'd at Virtue's breast,
Withold the blow, that kills a thousands rest,
Unite with us, exterminate the foes,
Who strive to wound your national repose;
We love your Sons, who reverence our laws,
They share our riches, honours, and applause.
Then do not madly deem our Crown a yoke,

Nor Pow's lenient hand too much provoke:
 Lest when too late, you sue for Albion's aid,
 When French usurpers, all your Rights invade,
 Too late alas! 'twill then be to complain,
 For aid you'll sue, but ah! you'll sue in vain.

'Tis your's my friend to boast a guiltless heart
 Of which Sedition, never shar'd a part,
 With pain I'm sure you view these dreadful scenes;
 And sigh that vice, should find such potent screens;
 Oh! scorn the wages of disloyal deeds,
 Disdain the grandeur which from guilt proceeds,
 Still fervent in your loyalty remain,
 And Treason's baneful practices arraign,
 Instruct the dubious, of your fellow crew,
 The glorious paths of virtue to pursue.

Point out the force, of our unerring laws,
 If they desert their King, or Country's cause;
 If reason, truth and timely precepts fail,
 Yet let these dread examples have avail,
 For hear the Cannon's loud, tremendous roar,
 The awful signal Treason is no more,

Offended justice, has her work begun,
The Mutineer his short career has run,
Wrapt in sulphureous smoke, the wretch ascends,
And from the fore yard arm, a corpse depends.

Oh! may the sound convey to Traitors ears,
A conscious **TERROR**, and awake their fears!
Oh! may the sight, all dreadful as it is,
Remind each wretch, the self same fate is his,
Unless he quickly bends to Mercy's voice
And virtue makes, instead of vice, his choice!
Ere yet his sliding feet shall quit the shore,
Which quitted once, he'll ne'er recover more.

But should a harden'd heart e'en this reject,
And dare our laws, and Sov'reign disrespect,
Strive to subvert the duty Heav'n enjoins,
Oh! bring to light his dangerous designs,
Relentless drag him to that shameful fate,
The due desert of Traitors to our state.
So may you honor'd here, and happy be,
Adieu, be *Loyal* and Remember ME.

FINIS.

